

## Announcement of Federal Funding for the Bland County Medical Clinic (April 24, 2006)

Bastian, Virginia

I am pleased to visit Bland County this afternoon to announce the provision of federal funding for the construction of a major expansion and renovation project at the Bland County Medical Clinic. At my request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a low-interest loan in the amount of \$1,279,790 to the Bland County Medical Clinic which will enable the Clinic to better serve patients seeking medical care by doubling the number of examination rooms and expanding the Clinic's waiting area.

The Bland County Medical Clinic first opened its doors in 1979 to serve Bland and Wythe County residents, regardless of the patient's ability to pay. Since that time, the Clinic has seen a dramatic increase in patient visits each year, and the Clinic now provides care to patients from not only Bland and Wythe Counties but also Giles and Tazewell Counties in Virginia and Mercer County in West Virginia.

In 2000, approximately 6,000 patients visited the Clinic seeking medical care. In 2005, that number had increased to more than 13,000 patient visits, and the Clinic expects to steadily increase its number of patient visits to 18,000 each year.

In August 2004, I announced a federal grant in the amount of \$1.2 million provided to the Clinic by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More than \$1 million of these funds have been used by the Clinic to hire nine additional staff, including a physician, a nurse practitioner, two nurses, a dietician, a Chief Financial Officer and support staff. This additional staff has made it possible for the Clinic to provide primary care services for a greater number of patients.

A portion of the funds have been used for the purchase of medical and computer equipment and to hire an architect to design the expansion and renovation of the current building. New computer equipment has been purchased to replace outdated models, new furnishings have been purchased for the waiting area, and updated medical equipment and furnishings have been purchased for the examination rooms.

Today we announce funding for the much needed expansion of the clinic building in order to meet the needs of the many patients who seek medical services here each year. The Clinic will expand from its current size of 5,780 square feet to 13,633 square feet. This addition will increase the number of patient examination rooms to 12, expand the waiting area, and add two quick care rooms for walk-in patients.

The total cost of the expansion and renovation project is \$1,975,400. In addition to the \$1,279,790 in federal funds I am announcing today, the Clinic has raised more than \$130,000 in private donations from members of the community. The Virginia Healthcare Foundation is providing a grant in the amount of \$200,000. An anonymous donor has provided funds

in the amount of \$140,000. The Wythe-Bland Foundation has awarded the clinic \$52,000 for the project, and the Clinic will utilize \$85,000 remaining from the 2004 Department of Health and Human Services grant. The Clinic has applied for a \$700,000 federal Community Development Block Grant to cover the remaining cost and reduce the amount of the Rural Development loan being announced today. I am strongly urging the funding agency to approve that grant, and I hope to be announcing that award in the near future.

I would like to say a word of thanks to a number of individuals who have been instrumental in the success of this project.

Susan Greever, Executive Director of the Bland County Medical Clinic, deserves our recognition this afternoon for her tireless efforts in support of this project. Susan has been leading the Clinic's planning and fund-raising efforts for the Clinic expansion and renovation for a number of years.

I also want to thank Bob Bruce, Chairman of the Clinic's Board of Directors, and the other members of the Board for their steadfast commitment to the continued success and growth of the Clinic.

I would also like to commend the Virginia Healthcare Foundation, the Wythe-Bland Foundation, and the community members who have contributed to the success of this project. I also want to thank Ellen Davis, the newly appointed State Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency, and Travis Jackson, Area Director for the Rural Development Agency, for their efforts to secure the federal funds which we are announcing today.

Finally, I want to recognize my Project Manager, Courtney Lamie, for her persistent and persuasive work in support of this project.

The expansion and renovation of the Bland County Medical Clinic is a critical step in meeting the Clinic's goal of providing the best health care possible to residents of Bland, Wythe, Giles and Tazewell Counties.